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AUTHOR Pittman, Karen J.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Several recently commissioned Department of Labor reports and other publications examining youth employment and training (E&T) programs were reviewed, and the findings were synthesized into a proposed framework for reviewing current and recommended directions for youth E&T programs with consideration for available research on youth development. It was discovered that the most effective youth E&T programs have been those designed with consideration for the findings of research on youth development. It was therefore recommended that program designers/providers take the following actions: (1) shift their focus from defining success primarily in terms of short-term changes in knowledge or behavior to defining success in terms of changes in perception and processing that can have more lasting implications; (2) improve their understanding of adolescent development and adolescent thinking, their commitment to providing not only services but also supports, and their ability to tailor program times and offerings to the needs of their youth; (3) realize that young people targeted for second-change youth E&T programs should not be expected to benefit from programs modeled after adult programs; (4) remember that young people are influenced not just by programs but also by their larger environment; and (5) give noncollege-bound youth the same time for "floundering" that is provided for college-bound youth. (MN)

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CENTER FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY RESEARCH

ACADEMY FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION THROUGH A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LENS:

Broad Recommendations for Sustaining Change

Karen J. Pittman
Michele Cahill
Shepherd Zeldin

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The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research was established in 1990 at the Academy for Educational Development in response to growing concern about youth problems. Like many organizations, CYD is dedicated to contributing to better futures for disadvantaged children and youth in the United States. CYD works vigorously to capitalize on both the growing concern about youth problems and growing willingness to search for new solutions. Our goal: to transform concern about *youth problems* into public and private commitment to *youth development*.

Every institution that touches young people's lives should be held accountable for providing, to the greatest extent possible, opportunities to meet needs and build competencies. Institutions do not have to be comprehensive service providers. They should, however, all work toward their mandates in a way that they can ensure, at an absolute minimum, that they are doing no harm.

CYD sees its roles as strengthening national, state, local, and community leaders' -- both public and private -- capacity to craft public and private policies, programs and practice standards that are supportive of the country's young people. CYD provides these leaders with a sound conceptual framework for understanding what youth need to develop and an array of practical tools and strategies for facilitating assessment and change.

To accomplish these objectives, the Center provides services which include: conducting and synthesizing youth research and policy analyses; disseminating information about exemplary youth programs and policies and establishing collaborative efforts with these groups; designing and implementing program evaluations, community assessments, and special projects; and providing technical assistance to national organizations, state and local governments, and public and private institutions interested in improving their youth development efforts.

The Academy for Educational Development is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing human development needs throughout the world. Since its founding in 1961, AED has conducted projects throughout the United States and in more than 100 countries in the developing world.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION THROUGH A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LENS: *Broad Recommendations for Sustaining Change*

In most societies, moving from school to work, or from preparation to productivity, is perhaps the most commonly held marker of a successful transition to adulthood. This step is particularly critical in the United States because of deep-seated beliefs in the importance of not only gainful work but economic self-sufficiency. Yet, since the 1970's, powerful and wide-ranging changes in the economy have made achieving this status a far greater challenge for the majority of American youth than in the past. Most are adjusting to these changes, although at yet to be documented costs to themselves and their families. For a growing proportion of young people who spend their adolescence in environments characterized by poverty, poor schools, and limited choices, the challenge is daunting. Half of the out-of-school youth without high school diplomas are unemployed. Figures for minority youth are close to seven in ten.

Clearly, this is a topic of much concern to government, the private sector, and schools. The call for a reshaping of current employment and training programs is coming not from outside the field, but from within. In addition, the Department of Labor, often in partnership with other federal departments and state and local governments, has for decades mounted demonstration projects to increase young people's immediate ability to find and keep jobs, as well as to improve their prospects for long-term labor market success. These efforts have had limited effectiveness and appear even weaker under current labor market conditions. The gauntlet has been dropped by the Department of Labor which has been proactive in discussing the problem and commissioning research and recommendations for changes.

The tenor of the analyses and recommendations pushes for a major revamping of both program strategies and goals, calling for an expanded focus beyond training and placement to the broader process of maturation. These recommendations are very constant with what is known about youth development.

This paper, then, is neither a critical review nor wake up call. While the language of the arguments varies, the rationale for taking a broader, developmental view of employment and training has been argued by the field. The purpose of this paper is to offer a framework for *re*viewing current and recommended directions for youth employment and training programs through a youth development lens.

The term youth development is often linked with the term comprehensive because the process is ongoing, complex, and influenced by the quality and richness of youth's environments, not just the programs they attend. We want to make clear, however, that it is not our recommendation that employment and training programs for youth be transformed into comprehensive programs that address all aspects and stages of youth development. After assessment, the scope of what is offered in some programs might actually narrow. What might change, we would hope, would be the sophistication with which program planners and providers assess when and how to provide a particular intervention, to whom to provide it, and what to expect as a result. The present tools -- training content and cost as the major definitions of inputs, basic youth demographics as the definition of youth characteristics, and job placement and earnings as the chief definitions of outcomes -- are simply too blunt for the task at hand.

This paper is divided into four parts. The first offers a cursory review of current recommendations for reshaping youth employment and training programs, drawing heavily from several recently-commissioned DOL reports. The second presents the youth development approach, discussing the developmental process and the role of social environments in supporting development. The third applies this approach to youth employment and training programs. The fourth discusses implications for ongoing efforts to redefine the field.

CURRENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESHAPING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

A 1992 review of the research on a range of youth employment programs commissioned by the Department of Labor (DOL) reports that both the quality of available data on youth employment

and training programs and resultant findings are troubling. [1] After reviewing the findings from analyses of the YEDPA projects, JOBSTART, STEP, and the California Conservation Corps, as well as a comparison analysis of the employment and earnings outcomes of CETA participants, the *Dilemmas* report concludes that the results thus far "are soberingly modest." (p.27).

A July 1994 DOL background paper, *Future Directions for Youth Demonstrations*, offers an even harsher assessment:

> Over the past 30 years, the federal government has spent perhaps $60 billion on youth and employment training. Only rarely have these programs been subject to formal evaluations in which applicants are randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Results from the evaluations undertaken to date have been mainly disappointing -- suggesting that for all the good intentions, money, and effort directed to these programs, they have had little or no positive effect on youth.[2]

Why have current programs been so ineffective? What does research offer as directions for reshaping or redirecting efforts? The basic assessment offered in a range of reports is that youth employment and training programs are suffering from the general plague now associated with most formal interventions for youth and families -- they are too short in length, too narrow in focus, and to isolated in delivery. [3]

The DOL *Future Directions* paper (pp. 8-9) pulls apart this assessment in its research-based

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[1] The authors of the DOL Report, *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming* (Volume 1) (DOL, 1993), conclude that the knowledge base is fragmentary, based on non-comparable, short-term findings from a small number of programs, and that the evidence is too generic -- too few evaluations offer data on what works for different sub-populations by age, race/ethnicity, and/or gender.

[2] *Future Directions for Youth Demonstrations*, DOL, July 1994. Background Paper prepared for a Department of Labor experts meeting on next steps in Employment and Training research.

[3] For example, *The National JTPA Study: Title II Impacts on Earnings and Employment at 18 Months* (Bloom et al) and the *Anatomy of a Demonstration* (Public/Private Ventures) have raised questions about the limitations of traditional JTPA programs in increasing earnings for youth from high risk environments.

examination of the possible explanations for failure. The paper identifies seven possible explanations for failure, suggesting that programs may have failed because they were not:

- *intensive enough in duration and effort,*
- *started earlier, before youth drop out of school,*
- *offered as a part of a series of interventions spaced throughout adolescence into adulthood,*
- *part of larger efforts to address community-wide effects such as peer pressure which would suggest the need to saturate impoverished neighborhoods, making the community, rather than the individual, the target,*
- *accompanied by larger efforts to ameliorate the effects of inner city poverty,*
- *part of efforts to increase the number of interventions present in neighborhoods -- generating a critical mass of programs may be as important as individual program quality,*
- *acknowledging the possibility of deep-seated intractable problems among youth that are either innate or put in motion early in life.*

With the exception of the last possible explanation that allows futility to raise its ugly head, these possible explanations of the failure of current program strategies call, one after another, for *strategies to be more comprehensive* -- more time, broader scope, broader target population, broader coordination with other efforts. They are entirely consistent with the broad call for action put forth in reports over the past few years that urge recognition of the complexity of competencies needed for labor market success and encourage the Department of Labor to adopt more *comprehensive goals*.

Several national commissions and studies including the SCANS report have pointed to the need for a broad range of competencies for long-term labor market success including literacy, math, higher order thinking skills, and personal/social competencies such as self-reliance and the ability to work in groups.

This questioning of both goals and strategies has raised core questions about how human beings

develop competence, sending program planners actively searching for ways to augment past human capital theories -- the driving force behind traditional training programs -- with knowledge from developmental psychology and, particularly, about adolescent development. This push is stated very clearly in *Strengthening Programs for Youth*, the 1993 P/PV report to the U. S. Department of Labor:

> This report recommends that the federal Department of Labor (DOL) take a leadership role in establishing and supporting programs aiming to promote the overall maturation of disadvantaged youth, from their early teens through their early twenties. It is a broader role than the Department has traditionally taken -- until now, the emphasis has been primarily on assisting in the acquisition of specific skills.
>
> But that approach has not been effective, as evidenced by a host of evaluations and research studies. The decent jobs of today's (and tomorrow's) economy demand an array of skills and attributes -- cognitive, interpersonal, emotional and moral -- that go beyond good work habits, literacy and job-specific skills. And an increasing number of America's youth grow up in environments where those skills and attributes are not formed as part of the natural growing up process....
>
> Why DOL as a leader in youth development?...Work and learning represent core activities around which much of our development and maturation, as individuals and citizens, take place. As a nation, we have already determined to improve the usefulness of learning for our youth's development. We need a like commitment to work as a developmental asset.(Walker,Preface,i.)

Walker's call to consider youth employment preparation a component of youth development and, therefore, to place it firmly within the developmental context should be heeded. But acknowledging the complexities of development requires a fundamental challenge to the way youth employment programs have been defined.

As the DOL analysis suggested, next step strategies could call for the scaling up of major experiments to saturate communities or move families, or for the development of long-term commitments to monitor and change the trajectory of individual youth's progress over the span

of years rather than months. Clearly, direction from research and practice is needed.[4] P/PV, again, has words of wisdom here:

> Programs to increase the employability of youth should be conceived of as ways to enhance or boost the natural process of human development that inevitably occurs during this stage of life. ... No single program, whatever its duration, is likely to have a significant impact in all the areas of development for any individual. But the potential must exist in programs for participants to benefit in whatever areas they do need to develop. (p.8)

> Carrying out this more developmentally oriented approach to programming for disadvantaged youth will require changes to many conventional practices in social programming. However, the changes are not radical; they are evolutionary... (p.*i*)

A 1992 AED report by Weinbaum et al., *Learning Work: Breaking the Mold in Youth Employment Programs*,[5] documented this evolutionary process as it occurred, with AED's technical assistance support, in four New York City DOL programs. The author's acknowledge that "the work of creating new visions for the participating programs and implementing new approaches was an enormously difficult undertaking (p. *vii*) but conclude that fundamental changes occurred because program staff "took ownership of the process"" (p.60).

The AED report, the P/PV report (1993) and others offer lists of practice principles for effective programming which speak to issues ranging from mission, staffing, and organizational

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[4]One of the lessons learned from the pregnancy prevention field, which the authors know well, is that, without direction, the embracing of the argument that pregnancy prevention required improved access to information, services and a broad improvement of life options led to a push for comprehensive programs that allowed everything from basketball to tutoring to be defined as pregnancy prevention and allowed for those things known to be essential -- accurate information and access to contraceptive services -- to be downplayed. In order to avoid chaos, broad definitions of the problem need to be accompanied by specific frameworks for assessing, planning, and prioritizing strategies.

[5] *Learning Work: Breaking the Mold in Youth Employment Programs*, by A. Weinbaum, V. Mitchell, and R. Weinstock, Academy for Educational Development, 1992. A shorter version of this paper has been prepared by Weinbaum and Wirmusky for the National Youth Employment Coalition, 1994.

characteristics to programming, youth assessment, and active engagement. A 1993 report by Cahill,[6] done as the culmination of work by the New York City Youth Employment Consortium, offers recommendations for practice changes in the words of employment and training providers themselves. The committee, after discussions of the goals and framework of youth development, offered a list that included:

- activities that get engagement by young people
- high expectations of students by staff
- ability to articulate a mission and positive, concrete goals for achievement
- presence of a capacity to do full assessment (personal, social, skills)
- attention to life planning skills (family relationships, social, parenting, housing)
- provision of meaningful work/community service
- citizenship training
- structures that encourage participants to bond to staff
- flexibility, open entry/exit and individualized menus, choices in programs
- opportunities for internships; links to jobs
- bridges/referrals, post-program services
- behavior-based competency tests rather than mere paper and pencil
- reflection/planning time for staff
- more flexible combinations of acceptable outcomes.

Cahill reports that the Consortium recognized that "for programs to be effective in positioning participants on pathways to success they had to go beyond narrow focuses on acquisition of job skills or even behavioral changes..."(p.8) and that "...youth must meet needs and build competencies in many areas of their lives at the same time as they are acquiring vocational skills."

She concludes, reinforcing P/PV's caution against interpreting responsiveness to development as a need for comprehensiveness:

> Programs may not be able to provide support directly to participants in meeting all these needs and tasks, but they must pay attention to how youth find routes to meeting them or risk young people's disaffiliation as survival needs overwhelm

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[6] *Strengthening Youth Employment Programs Through Youth Development: A Report with Recommendations to the New York City Department of Employment from the New York City Youth Employment Consortium*, by Michele Cahill, Youth Development Institute, Fund for the City of New York, 1993.

affiliation to the program. (p.9)

Clearly, the need to revamp employment and training programs in ways that are more attuned to youth's overall developmental accomplishments, needs, and supports has been raised. The challenge is offering a cohesive, research-based framework in which this revamping can occur.

THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT APPROACH: ACHIEVING OUTCOMES THROUGH SUPPORTING THE MATURATION PROCESS

The term *youth development* has come to represent an approach to youth programming and policy that stresses preparation and development -- rather than prevention, deterrence and deficit reduction -- as its ultimate goal and the provision of supports and opportunities as essential strategies. However, the pressing problems faced by youth -- pregnancy, violence, substance abuse, illiteracy -- are not ignored. There is full realization that deficits, risks, and problems need to be addressed, but problem prevention is deemed inadequate as *the end* goal. Similarly, the youth development approach does not minimize the centrality of provision of essential services -- basic services that address needs for shelter, safety, and food, as well as developmental services such as academic instruction and occupational training. Services, in and of themselves, however, are insufficient.

The argument, made by an increasingly broad spectrum of program planners, researchers, and policy makers, is that there needs to be a broadening of both strategies and goals that shape youth programs. This expansion can and should be informed not just by the general idea of youth development and developmentally appropriate programs, but by specific research- and theory-based frameworks that synthesize what is known.

As noted earlier, there is growing agreement that the relative ineffectiveness of many public interventions to achieve lasting or even short-term gains in improving educational or employment outcomes or in decreasing the incidence of problems such as pregnancy, substance abuse, and violence can be attributed to the fact that these programs are too fragmented, too short, and too narrowly focused on addressing a particular outcome. This assessment is consistent with the

general trend in human services reform toward making services more *client-centered* -- recognizing the interrelatedness of the problems and needs that individuals and families have, responding more flexibly to these needs, and involving the clients as active partners.

Efforts to revamp current programming for youth certainly need to acknowledge the complexity of life (e.g. young people who are homeless, hungry, or abused need more than condoms, GED courses, or job placement services) and the need for engagement. They also, however, need to acknowledge *the complexity of adolescent development and the central role that engagement plays in the developmental process.*[7] Every intervention being directed at young people, from career mentors to music lessons, is, in effect, being aimed at a moving target. Improving the aim requires, first, understanding that the target is not stationary and, second, anticipating the direction and pace of the movement.

The DOL list of suggested reasons for failure essentially highlighted two of the basic tenets of adolescent development theory:

- The possible needs to start programs earlier, make them more intensive, and to sequence interventions are consistent with the fact that *development is an ongoing process* -- a process that, in adolescence, is defined by the maturation from less mature to more mature ways of thinking, acting, coping, and problem-solving.
- The suggestions that program ineffectiveness may be due to the competing community context, the broad impact of impoverishment, are consistent with the second premise -- that *development occurs within and is very much influenced by the context of an adolescent's social environment.*

THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS. The most obvious maturation process that occurs during the adolescent years is physical development. Young people, by 16 or 17, have basically

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[7] See Blake et al., "Recruiting Unemployed Youths as Planners of Youth Employment" in *The Value of Youth* edited by Pearl et. al (1978) for an "historic" discussion of the value of youth participation in program planning.

achieved their full adult size. But physical development is only one of the five basic developmental tasks. During the adolescent years, which are now roughly defined as the ages of 10 to 19, young people must also mature *cognitively* (developing the ability for abstract thinking), *socially* (developing the skills and perspectives needed to function independently beyond family and peer group), *emotionally* (developing a sense of identity that can guide choices and help process and regulate feelings), and *morally* (developing basic values and perspectives that allow them to operate ethically, justly, and compassionately).

Adolescent development has been the object of considerable research, although most of it to date has not traced the development of non-white, non-affluent youth.[8] The very basic lessons of this research are that:

- development is an uneven process. Variation among adolescents is considerable -- two 13 year olds, even two 17 year olds, can have very different developmental profiles. And variation within individual adolescents is considerable -- the young person who is cognitively capable of highly abstract thinking can be relatively immature physically and socially.
- the social environments in which adolescents live have considerable impact on the pacing, ease, and outcomes of development. Young people's social environments -- the context in which they conduct their daily lives -- can be described not only in terms of physical attributes (safety, availability of essential facilities) but also in terms of the quality, quantity, and congruence of relationships and opportunities.

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research suggests that the basic characteristics of youth's social environments be described as services (instruction, care, access to facilities), opportunities (chances to learn, earn, and contribute), and supports (expectations, affirmation,

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[8] See *At the Threshold* (Feldman and Elliot, eds., 1990), an edited volume commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation, for an excellent review of the adolescent literature and a sound critique of the research. See Public/Private Ventures' *Strengthening Programs for Youth* (Gambone, 1993) for a brief, accessible review of the research and its implications for disadvantaged youth.

and guidance in setting and accomplishing goals). Each is essential for youth development.[9] However, theorists are unanimous in arguing that because development occurs through interaction and internalization, relationships and opportunities are key. Young people need information and services, but it is through the balanced provision and interpretation of experiences that youth incorporate knowledge, attitudes, and values into their basic way of thinking. It is this process, which Kegan, Broderick, and Popp in a background paper commissioned for the 1993 P/PV report refer to as the transformation of perspective, that is the essence of maturational development.

VARIATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS. There is a growing body of research that suggests that services, opportunities, and supports for youth, (SOS), vary enormously across social environments and that in each of the developmental areas (e.g. cognitive, social) key elements are either lacking or competing.[10] For example, low quality schools that further limit education through tracking, coupled with scarce opportunities and expectations for "high yield" leisure activities, work to constrain disadvantaged youth's cognitive development. Social development is both constrained by the lack of opportunities for structured interaction in which teamwork and leadership are emphasized and by the presence of opportunities that reward and reinforce anti-social interactions (such as gangs). Equally important are the availability of adults modeling the work, family, and civic behaviors that most parents want their children to adopt.

An overall approach to supporting youth in high-risk environments, then, must include sustained, long-term efforts to improve their natural environment -- schools, neighborhood security and

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[9] Zeldin and Pittman, *Defining Youth Outcomes and Environmental Supports*, forthcoming. See also, "SOS for Youth", Pittman's editorial column in *Youth Today*, September/October 1994.

[10] Fritz Ianni, in *The Search for Structure* (1989), argues that it is not just the availability of supports and opportunities for youth that differs across communities, but also the congruence of those supports. In many disadvantaged communities, the values and expectations of the family compete with those of "the street" and often the school. Neighborhoods in which successful and relatively nontraumatic transitions from adolescence to adulthood were the norm rather than the exception were marked by a clear "community charter for youth" that was backed by consistent messages and opportunities across the various institutions.

amenities, job opportunities (for youth and adults); peer groups, role models, family; and the array of permanent community organizations that provide opportunities for socializing, recreating, learning, and contributing. In the interim, however, efforts must be made to provide these through structured programs.

PROGRAMMATIC STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The fundamental change that must occur in the definition, design, and delivery of programs for youth is that they must shift their focus from defining success primarily in terms of short-term changes in knowledge or behavior to defining success in terms of changes in perception and processing that can have more lasting implications.[11] *The issue of program comprehensiveness should not be measured only by the range of services offered, but also in their approach to young people, which is defined by 1) their understanding of adolescent development and adolescent thinking, 2) their commitment to providing not only services, but supports (via sustained and caring relationships with adults that provide nurturing, guidance, and monitoring) and opportunities (via challenges to use and develop skills, knowledge, and values), and 3) their ability to tailor the timing, duration, and mix of their offerings to the needs of their youth.*

Moving Up, is an example of a inner-city youth program (New York City) that embodies this approach.[12] In their own words:

> Moving Up is a comprehensive employment, training, and mentoring program that helps inner-city youth make a successful transition to the work force. It is one of the few programs in the nation that focuses on job retention and career advancement.
>
> Moving Up gives young people the skills and supports they need to become self-sufficient. Key features include:

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[11] Again, P/PV, in *Strengthening Programs for Youth*, argues this well, based on commissioned work by Kegan, Broderick, and Popp.

[12] Statistics taken from Moving Up literature, Vocational Foundation, Inc, New York, New York. Five other exemplary programs are documented in P/PV's *Strengthening Programs for Youth.*

- An apprenticeship-like combination of a job, occupational skills training, and basic skills instruction.

- 12 to 24 months of mentoring and job coaching after job placement to help young people keep their jobs and obtain raises and promotions.

- Placement in a wide variety of jobs, such as: assistant photographer, home health aide, technician, data entry clerk, drafter, chef's assistant, construction inspector, electrician apprentice, and claims adjuster.

The program, while small, touts impressive statistics: 79% completion of job skills training, 92% job placement, 74% job retention after one-year, 62% of those placed obtaining raises, 18% in college and more than eight of ten have delayed parenthood and avoided substance abuse and criminal activity.

Programs like these combine, rather than select among the five major employment and training strategies: work experience, on the job training, labor market preparation (attitudes, knowledge, basic skills), job placement, and occupational training.[13] They operate according to the practices for program development, staff selection and organizational support which reflect the basic tenets of youth development offered above -- practices that have been further defined by employment and training intermediaries such as Public/Private Ventures, The Academy for Educational Development, and Brandeis University.

There is no doubt that such programs exist and that efforts to redefine mission and best practice are going on. The question is how to institutionalize these efforts and better document their strategies and impacts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REDEFINING EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMMING FOR YOUTH

Shifting, as recommended, to a set of definitions and practices that support youth employment

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[13] *Dilemmas in Youth Employment Programming: Findings from the Youth Research and Technical Assistance Project* (Volume 1), DOL 1992.

and work preparation in the broader context of youth development will require some very concrete changes -- changes in the definition of goals, the assessment of youth's "readiness" for training, and the definition of program characteristics. Since change, in the end, is cemented if not sparked by accountability, we focus our recommendations on efforts to redefine current measures of *program success, program eligibility and placement, and broad-scale program strategies*. Each is challenged, in a fundamental way, when accepting the premise that the goal of these programs is not just short-term job placement but changes in the trajectory of overall development.

DEFINING OUTCOMES. Currently, definitions of goals for youth, especially as described in public policy, are defined rather narrowly: educational attainment, employment, and avoidance of trouble -- crime, pregnancy, substance abuse. These are the goals that shape social policy. But, as noted, in the SCANS report, other goals suggesting broader definitions of employment-related competencies are needed.

These arguments for definitions of outcomes that are positive, broader than academic and vocational competence, and reflective of the importance of youth's perceptions of self, others, and community, are backed by both common sense, and research and theory. They suggest that one of the primary shifts that has to occur in the rethinking of policies and programs for youth is in the definition of youth outcomes .

The proposed list of desirable youth outcomes is offered as a strategy to broaden our expectations for youth-serving systems and programs and, in so doing, to change the standards of accountability to which we hold them. As history continually highlights, if we can establish new standards of accountability -- in this case, standards that reflect youth development, not only problem prevention or credentials -- then policies and programs will gradually change accordingly.[14]

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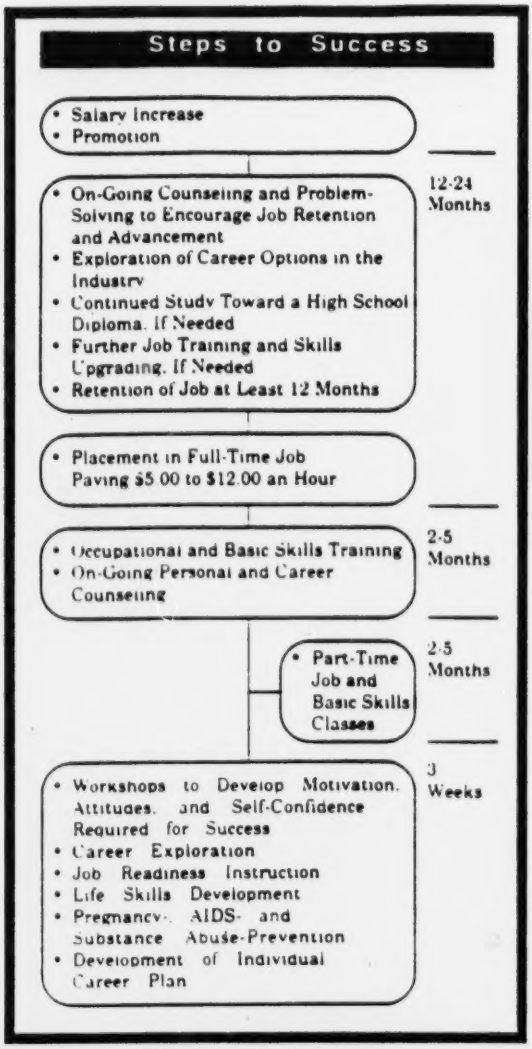
[14] As we have witnessed over the past twenty years, *whoever defines the problem defines the solution, as well as the standards of success*. For example, with the concern about "high-risk youth," literally thousands of programs have been designed to prevent drug use and early and unprotected sexual

DESIRABLE YOUTH OUTCOMES

Aspects of Identity Confidence, Connections, Commitment	**Areas of Ability** Competencies
Young People have basic needs critical to survival and healthy identity development. They are a sense of:	*To succeed as adults, youth must acquire adequate attitudes, behaviors, and skills in five areas:*
Safety and Structure	**Health** Good current health status and evidence of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that will assure future well-being, for example, exercise, good nutrition and effective contraceptive practices.
Belonging and membership	
Self-worth and an ability to contribute	**Personal/Social** Intrapersonal skills - an ability to understand emotions and practice self-discipline; and interpersonal skills, such as working with others, developing and sustaining friendships through cooperation, empathy, negotiation, and developing judgment skills and a coping system.
Independence and control over one's life	
Closeness and several good relationships	**Knowledge, Reasoning, and Creativity** A broad base of knowledge and an ability to appreciate and demonstrate creative expression. Good oral, written, problem-solving, and an ability to learn. Interest in life-long learning and achieving.
Competence and mastery	
Self-awareness	**Vocational** A broad understanding and awareness of life options and the steps to take in making choices. Adequate preparation for work and family life, and an understanding of the value and purpose of family, work and leisure.
	Citizenship Understanding of their nation's, their community's and their racial, ethnic, or cultural groups history and values. Desire to be ethical and to be involved in efforts that contribute to the broader good.

activity. Consequently, a program has been deemed effective if participants abstain or reduce their incidence of these behaviors. Similarly, in academic and employment programs, a young person has been viewed as "developed" if s/he obtains a high school diploma and secures a job. Programs have been judged according to these standards.


Steps to Success
• Salary Increase
• Promotion
• On-Going Counseling and Problem-Solving to Encourage Job Retention and Advancement
• Exploration of Career Options in the Industry
• Continued Study Toward a High School Diploma, If Needed
• Further Job Training and Skills Upgrading, If Needed
• Retention of Job at Least 12 Months
12-24 Months
• Placement in Full-Time Job Paying $5.00 to $12.00 an Hour
• Occupational and Basic Skills Training
• On-Going Personal and Career Counseling
2-5 Months
• Part-Time Job and Basic Skills Classes
2-5 Months
• Workshops to Develop Motivation, Attitudes, and Self-Confidence Required for Success
• Career Exploration
• Job Readiness Instruction
• Life Skills Development
• Pregnancy-, AIDS- and Substance Abuse-Prevention
• Development of Individual Career Plan
3 Weeks

Moving Up Program

The call to define desired outcomes for youth in terms of positives rather than negatives has surprisingly deep implications. It is not just semantics. On the surface this shift can be achieved simply by reversing some of the indicators -- *reduce dropout rate* changes to *increase graduation rate*, *reduce unemployment rate* changes to *increase employment rate*. Even these, however, can be pushed.

There is a difference, we would argue, in policies and programs designed to have a short term impact on the youth employment rate (if that is set as the goal), versus those that have a longer term impact on the general employability and earning power of youth. *To date there is no evidence to dispute the wisdom that college graduation is the best strategy for achieving the second goal. Yet few employment and training programs see preparation or counseling for college entrance as a legitimate part of their efforts, and even fewer have these as indicators of program success. Outcomes are measured in terms of short-term employment, earnings or earnings differentials; skills or credentials gains (basic academic skills, G.E.D. certification); and/or program completion.*

What are valid indicators of program success for employment and training programs? We would argue that they should be pegged solely or primarily on earnings if and only if the young people participating are being trained intensively to move into high-wage jobs. If the goal is employment experience and long-term preparation for the labor market, then a broader mix of

outcomes is needed, one which recognizes that the commitment is not only to providing concrete work experience but also to providing supports and services to build interpersonal and social competencies, address health-related attitudes and behaviors that could impede employment success, and move the young person closer to being able to make informed choices. The goal, as Gambone describes it in *Strengthening Programs for Youth*, is to achieve a shift in "viewing programs as strategies for increasing the amount of information youth have, to strategies that seek to strengthen the process of developmental growth." (1993, p. 16)

There is a need to establish a range of goals and develop a much clearer sense of how they connect developmentally. The Moving Up program, discussed earlier, graphically depicts its expectations for youth over a one to two year time period. Research is needed to understand what are reasonable outcomes to expect of youth who enter programs with varying skills. This hinges on having better tools for assessing developmental progress and developmental supports.

ASSESSING ELIGIBILITY AND YOUTH READINESS. Eligibility to second-chance youth employment and training programs is defined primarily in terms of demographic characteristics -- age, poverty, parenthood status, school status, basic skills levels, employment status. These definitions are fine for defining eligibility, but they are grossly insufficient for assessing youth's needs and competencies. Each of the studies mentioned throughout this paper emphasizes the importance of individual assessments. Developmentally appropriate programming hinges on staff's ability to assess participants skills, needs, and motivations and to customize, to the extent possible, program resources to provide the right amount of challenge and support.

One of the principal lessons to be gained from the research on youth's development is that the young people targeted for second-chance employment and training programming not only are not, but should not be expected to benefit from programs modeled after adult programs. Sixteen year olds, even 19 year olds who because of deficits or conflicts (incongruence) in their social environments, are still engaged in developing the competencies needed to be good workers -- good health habits, good judgement skills, and good interpersonal skills including coping, conflict resolution, and ability to generalize, synthesize, self-instruct, and work as part of a

team. Occupational-training and job placement services are not enough to guarantee the employment success of young people who are not developmentally ready for the complex demands of the workplace. In general, targeted information-heavy interventions offered at the wrong time, without necessary maturation present, will be minimally effective.

The second principal lesson is that young people are influenced not just by the program, but by their larger environment. Assessments, therefore, need to take into account not only the strengths and weakness of the individual, but of his or her support system. A soup-to-nuts program for 17 and 18 year olds without job skills or experience may not need to build an entire support system from scratch if significant numbers of young people have supports available to them through family, contacts, or community-based organizations. Better assessment of existing supports and opportunities can lead to wiser use of program resources.

RESHAPING THE LANDSCAPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING. For college-bound youth, there is a built-in period of "floundering". Exploration, indecision, and even failure are tolerated for at least two of the four years of college without serious consequence. These young people, who by and large have benefitted from environments much more supportive of their development than those inhabited by the participants in youth employment and training programs, are given a broad time frame and structure in which to complete the transition to adulthood. Seen most broadly, this is what is needed for non-college bound youth. Rather than a series of fragmented programs or long-term programs that lock youth into specific career paths or count job changes as failures, young people looking for employment need assistance balancing the need to earn money, continue to build skills, broaden knowledge bases, and shape attitudes, with the need to craft a set of work experiences that can lead to long-term labor market success. The choices between on-the-job training, general work preparation, occupational skills training, and direct work experience should not be either-or choices, nor should they be non-choices in the sense that young people apply only for what is available at the time they are seeking employment.

Shaping an ongoing network of services, supports, and opportunities for youth moving into the

labor market without the benefit of college degrees has to be driven by the belief that long-term gains in employability may be best achieved through short-term detours to work on developmental tasks. This has implications for the length, structure, and shape of programs. It also has implications for the quality and competencies of staff and the characteristics of contracting organizations. Community-based organizations tend to be strong on supports and weak on job opportunities; traditional employer-based or -linked programs suffer the opposite problem.

As the field gears up to redefine the goals and strategies for addressing the employment and training needs of growing numbers of young people, it is our hope that this redefinition is driven not only by the labor market realities that short-term programs cannot produce significant gains in youth's earnings, but also by the recognition that the participants of these programs are not adults -- even though many have assumed adult responsibilities.